

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002060

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/14/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [MARR](#) [SU](#) [DARFUR](#)

SUBJECT: AU-LED TALKS ON DARFUR IN ABUJA ROCKED BY INTENSIFIED FIGHTING

Classified By: AF SPECIAL ADVISOR BRUCE EHRNMAN FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Summary. African Union-led peace talks on Darfur hit a new snag on Monday, December 13, when rebel movements announced suspension of their participation until the Government of Sudan meets a series of demands, including a halt to the current GOS military offensive to "open the roads." Movement leaders subsequently agreed to return to the table that evening, but Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) told the AU early December 14 that they would not return to the table until the current Government military offensive in Darfur has stopped, and GOS forces have returned to their previous positions. Sharing concern for what it considers a very serious violation of the ceasefire and other agreements, the AU has told the GOS delegation that it will end this round of talks unless the Government can commit today to halt the offensive immediately. The Joint Commission will hold an emergency session tomorrow, December 15, to consider the situation on the ground in Darfur. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The present round of AU-led talks on Darfur in Abuja, Nigeria, have been plagued by reports of increasing violence on the ground since they began December 10. New levels of violence, in which large concentrations of GOS and Jingaweit forces have assembled to conduct operations to "open the roads," now have led the SLA/M to suspend their participation in the talks. Reports from the CFC in Darfur state that the GOS has launched a major offensive, and that Jingaweit forces have attacked and burned at least four villages. (Rebel leaders claim that twelve villages have been burnt.)

¶3. (C) Late December 13, SLA/M rep read a "joint SLA/M - JEM statement" announcing that the movements were suspending their participation in the talks until several key demands were met by the government and the international community. The statement also included a new set of negotiating objectives that would give the Darfur process equal standing with the Naivasha north - south negotiations and require any new Sudan constitution to be consistent with the outcome of the Darfur peace process. Following strong statements by the AU, U.S., and other international participants, which included a challenge to use this opportunity to demonstrate that the parties can successfully address violence through the AU and the Abuja process, the movements appeared to have agreed to return to the session on the morning of December 14. However, following new reports of intensified violence on the ground, the SLA/M informed the AU that it would not return to the table until the GOS had stopped the offensive and returned its forces to their original positions.

¶4. (C) In consultation with the international partners, the AU has refused to accept a suspension of the talks at this time, but is conducting separate discussions with each of the parties on December 14. Based on confirmation from the CFC in Darfur that the government remains on the offensive despite remonstrations by the CFC/AMIS (Ceasefire Commission/African Union Mission in Sudan) and the international community, the AU has taken an unusually tough line with the GOS, telling delegation leader Magzoub al-Khalifa that unless he could assure the AU mediation that the GOS could and would halt the offensive immediately, the AU could not continue to conduct this round. When al-Khalifa sought to deflect the question by castigating the SLA/M behavior, Mediation acting chairman Sam Ibok demanded a clear, specific answer. Al-Khalifa said he would do whatever was necessary to facilitate the talks. Ibok asked him to get a more specific answer from Khartoum.

¶5. (U) Consultations with the movements will take place later today. In informal discussions with the US and other partners, the SLA/M states that its key requirement is an end to the offensive. It disassociated itself with JEM's political objectives outlined in the joint statement, which seek to carve out a separate niche to gain greater status for the movement in a process JEM seeks to put at odds with Naivasha. That said, even the SLA/M underscores that Naivasha does not meet their concept of a satisfactory comprehensive agreement. We have stressed to both movements that they will have to work on the national level within the process that the Naivasha agreement will begin, taking advantage of opportunities provided by an increasingly open and democratic political structure. Naivasha will not be reopened.

16. (C) Comment. We have told all the parties that violence should not prevent talks, and that they should focus their efforts on using the available mechanisms to end the fighting. We have also underscored that attacks on civilian transportation on Darfur's roads by the movements is unacceptable, but that the Government's pretext that it needs to protect free movement through a major military action is also unacceptable. That said, the AU has taken an increasingly tough - and very welcome - stand with the GOS delegation, requiring it to drop standard pretenses that it bears no responsibility for any of the violence or conditions in Darfur. Sam Ibok has been an able chair; the arrival December 14 of AU Special Representative for Sudan, Baba Kingabe, has further stiffened the mediation. Ibok made clear to the GOS that if the talks collapse, he will focus responsibility on Government-inspired violence in Darfur, not on the movements. No one wants the talks to fail; rather, there is strong hope that the GOS will pull back. We anticipate that the SLA/M will participate in the Joint Commission session on December 15.

17. (C) Comment continued: The absence of the most senior SLA/M leaders, Abdulwahid Nur and Mini Minawi, has left the movement's delegation somewhat adrift and without flexibility. Minawi has called U.S. reps several times with complaints about AU behavior and excuses for his absence. We are told the SLA/M leadership crisis will be resolved in the next day or two, but we have heard this before. Another reason for the SLA/M leadership's absence may be preparation for the "all-Darfur" conference scheduled for Tripoli on December 25, which will include both movements, the GOS, and participants from Darfur's traditional leadership structures.

18. (U) Minimize considered.  
CAMPBELL